School Libraries and the Montana Shared Catalog (MSC)

- The Montana Shared Catalog is statewide project of the Montana State Library. It is a voluntary, library consortium consisting of 166 libraries and library branches.
- MSC members are found in 92 Montana communities serving a combined population of over 500,000 Montanans.
- The MSC is supported by the Montana State Library and funded through the Federal Library Service and Technology Act monies, State funding and the MSC membership costs. Annual membership costs are based on size of the library's collection, circulation and number of users. The smallest libraries pay about $700-$800 annually. Libraries falling in the "medium sized" range pay an annual cost of $3000-$5000. The largest libraries' annual cost range is $25,000-$37,000.
- The consortium owns the shared hardware, software and database (hosted at the State Library) that automate local library operations and catalogs.
- The MSC is governed by an Executive Board consisting of member library directors elected to rotating terms. Policies, budget, and by-laws are set by the MSC Executive Board, with approval by the membership and in partnership with the State Library.
- There are currently 66 public school libraries in the Montana Shared Catalog along with 6 academic libraries, 82 public libraries, and 12 special (law, medical, government, and museum) libraries.

Schools listed below have inquired about the MSC or have requested a cost quote to join within the past year:
Bozeman School District 7
Broadus Schools
Chester-Joplin-Inverness (CJI) Public School District
Conrad Schools
Dutton School
Lockwood School
Richey Public Schools
Rosebud Public Schools
Roundup School

Applications to join in FY2015 were received from Richey Public Schools and Rosebud Public School.

Benefits of the MSC:
- Access to nearly 4 million items in the combined collections of 167 multi-type libraries located throughout Montana.
- Right-scaled infrastructure includes hosted servers (IBM) in Helena and software (state-of-the-art integrated library system) accessed thru the state government network with 24/7 support and daily backups provided by the MSC admin and support team in Helena. The local school district or library staff and students need a stable, high bandwidth internet connection and Windows (OS) or Apple (OS) workstations to use the MSC system.
- Web-based search and discovery layers that enable staff and students to view their library's collection and, if enabled, allows them to renew checked out items and place, or cancel holds from anywhere in the world. Access to the MSC is not just in their library and not just in web browsers but also via mobile devices and even from within their library's Facebook page.

- Students have direct access to wider variety of research materials for school homework/projects at any time, from any location with Internet access within Montana.
- "Enriched Content" consisting of book cover art, summaries, reviews and abstracts is seamlessly provided in the online search results. The soon-to-be-implemented "Enterprise" search engine brings even more options to searching such as scoping search results through "facets", and "did you mean" options similar to Google searches.
- Networking and "connecting" with peers. The MSC is not just about sharing the system; it is also about sharing experience, knowledge and advice with their fellow members and most importantly fostering library development and resource sharing.
- Consortia cost sharing reduces vendor related costs that would otherwise be prohibitive for a robust automation system and increases negotiation power for purchasing and contracts.
- Students can obtain hands-on experience using a library catalog and database search interface that they will be exposed to at higher grade levels, in college and at public libraries.
- The ability to integrate student information from the school student information system.

School Specific System Training and Support Issues:
- System Hardware/Software support:
  1. We have found that additional time involved with adding new school libraries to the system due to:
     a. Comfort with new technology is sometimes a challenge. Additional profiling/configuration requirements for circulation, cataloging, and reports.
     b. Generally more difficult due to network restrictions in place (related to network tech support, IP changes and troubleshooting).
     c. Library staff availability for consulting and training not easily arranged due to their workload.
     d. Generally more post-migration support as compared to publics.
  2. Related to 1.b. – Schools generally have stricter network/firewall requirements and configurations. This often requires MSC support staff coordinating with the school's or district's IT department to facilitate downloading, installing or upgrading the Java Workflows client used by the library staff to interface with the MSC servers.

- System Operational Support:
  1. Higher staff turnover increases the likelihood of untrained media specialists thus increasing the amount of time support staff spend assisting with training, questions and problems.
  2. Teacher-librarians are often unable to leave their schools to attend training or join discussions of support-related questions and problems.
  3. Additional workload associated with annual student roll-ups to the next grade and adding new students.
  4. Additional workload associated with setting up, maintaining and scheduling school specific reports needed for statistics, overdue notices/lists by grade or teacher, and summer scheduled reports suspension/unsuspension.
  5. Additional workload associated with gathering, configuring, and removing end-of-school year due dates and related special circulation policies.

Projected growth of schools within the MSC:
The Montana Library Directory lists 117 public libraries and branches in Montana. Currently, 82 of these libraries are members of the MSC. These numbers indicate that, while the number of public libraries in the MSC could still potentially grow, the majority of public libraries are already members.

There are 564 school libraries listed in the Directory. Currently, 68 of these libraries are members of the MSC. In the last three years, the primary interest in joining the MSC has come from school libraries, with an increase

in interest from entire school districts.   We received 46 requests for cost estimates or for general information about membership in the MSC between 2011 and 2014.

Based on the number of requests for cost estimates and information about joining the MSC from schools, we are anticipating that we may receive requests for cost estimates from an estimated 40 school libraries (some of which could be large schools districts such as Billings, Bozeman and Kalispell) within the next three years.

To learn more about the MSC, contact:

 Ken Adams
Director of the Montana Shared Catalog
Montana State Library
Phone: 406-444-3004
Email: kadams@mt.gov